



Chief Editor: Elsie Davis

January - February 2014



## RD's Corner

Happy New Year, everyone!

I hope you had a wonderful holiday season and that you are starting

2014 filled with enthusiasm and anticipation of good things to come. My own good feelings about this new year rest on a strong foundation. I am looking over what Southeast Region employees in every program accomplished in 2013, and, once again, I am blown away. You truly are incomparable and amazing!

There is an esprit de corps in the Service that I believe is directly linked to the importance and value of our mission. Clearly, the work we do is not just a job to us; it is our passion. We are fully committed participants in a conservation enterprise that is much larger than any individual's self-interest and far beyond any profit motive. No matter what the challenges or setbacks, what we do has inherent value because the resources we are conserving have inherent value. They are a vital part of what makes America and her territories a beautiful and vibrant nation, "from sea to shining sea."

As I look at the year ahead, I am encouraged. Not because budgets will be lush or our employee ranks will swell. I am encouraged because of the quality of our people and their effort and the worthiness of our mission. I am encouraged because as a Service and as a Region, we are committed to excellence and constant improvement in all we do, for the sake of the resources we cherish and the people we serve. *Continued on next page...*

## Look Who's 50! Merritt Island NWR

By Cheri Ehrhardt, Merritt Island, Titusville, Florida

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of Merritt Island NWR (1963-2013), more than 100 folks gathered in November for a reunion of the refuge's employees in Titusville, Florida. Each decade of the refuge's history was represented! From the early days of the race for space to the demise of the dusky seaside sparrow to cold-stunned sea turtle rescues and ongoing fire management. The weekend kicked off with an oral history project, followed by a barbeque. The next day included a tour of the refuge and Kennedy Space Center on a NASA bus.

Folks reminisced about the post-hunt Thanksgiving dinners of the 1970's at Joan and Harvey Page's house with food and tables and chairs spread everywhere, where if you wanted coffee, you had to drink it in the bathroom, 'cause that was the only spot left to put anything!

We had pictures from the entire span of the 50-year history of the refuge, including the original Ford Fairlane! We had lots of pictures of staff with gators throughout the years, plus pictures of us posting signs, checking duck hunters, conducting environmental education programs, working with NASA, conducting fire management, controlling hogs, releasing turkeys, fixing facilities, restoring habitat, rescuing cold



1960's Merritt Island NWR entry sign.



Merritt Island NWR - Refuge Manager Curtis Wilson 1966 - erects refuge signs. photo: USFWS

stunned sea turtles, and controlling exotic plants. Interesting how some things never change.

A big thank you goes to the Merritt Island Wildlife Association for sponsoring the event and providing the fantastic barbequed pork and chicken, not to mention the liquid refreshments!



Merritt Island NWR staff in 1966.

*RD's Corner continued...*

I want you to share in the pride that all the RDT feels when we consider the depth and breadth of what you have done for fish, wildlife, plants and people in 2013. This is a small part of what you accomplished with your "blood, sweat and tears." Take the credit, and let that pride inspire the great things we will do together in 2014.

- *Cindy*

*Flip to page 11 to read highlights and just some of our proud achievements over the past 12 months.*

## In This Issue

- Page 1 - RD's Corner, Cover Story
- Page 2 - Dear Elsie
- Page 3 - Employee Spotlight, What's #Trending, Bragging Rights
- Page 4 - Bragging Rights continued
- Page 5 - Bragging Rights continued, Leadership Quote
- Page 6 - Bragging Rights continued
- Page 7 - Friends and Volunteers, Follow the Leader
- Page 8 - Get to Know an Office
- Page 9 - Coming and Going
- Page 10 - Poll Question, Survey Answers, Photo Caption, Holiday Illustration
- Page 11 - Comic, Something You Didn't Know About Me, Southeast Region Highlights
- Page 12-14 - Highlights continued

## Dear Elsie

**Dear Elsie:**

*As a supervisor, how do you deal with an unproductive employee after you have counseled the employee numerous times, and the employee has no respect for authority within the office?*

Signed, Firefly

**Dear Firefly:**

Dealing with an unproductive employee can cause or contribute to reduced efficiency and low morale within the office. Further, it may cause a supervisor to second-guess their ability to manage. If multiple counseling attempts have failed to improve an employee's performance, the next step should be to contact your Employee Relations Specialist in Human Resources. The Employee Relations Specialist will help you work through the process for dealing with an employee who has performance deficiencies.

The most important advice is to document instances of the unproductive work,

which can be done by sending the employee a brief "as we discussed..." email summarizing a recent performance discussion that you had with him/her. Always remember, performance feedback should be given throughout the performance year, not just during the mid-year and end-of-year reviews. This does not mean that you have to do a formal review of the employee's performance each time you provide them feedback; however, you should provide various levels of feedback verbally and in writing throughout the year on various projects and job tasks.

The performance evaluation process is only one tool for helping to improve the employee's work performance. Another tool is to consider a conversation or an honest talk with the person where you both have an opportunity to safely discuss your concerns. A recent book, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time*, by Susan Scott may be helpful. She offers some tips, which are useful to anyone who needs to have an honest conversation with their spouse, employees,

co-workers, or friends. Here is a brief outline, which you can use to guide you in your conversation with the employee.

The first tip is to *try and look at reality from the other person's point of view*: For example, does the person fully understand their job duties and what is expected of them? Do they need additional training to do their job? Is their workload too high – a lot to be done in too little time?

*Be open to hearing from the other person*: What is their view of the situation and what could be done to help solve it?

*Find a way to say what cannot be said*: For example, what will happen if we can't or don't work to solve the problems? How does this affect the person and the work station?

*Go deeper in the conversation*: Are there other ways the problems at work are affecting the other person beyond the issues at hand? For example, can the employee speak with someone or the supervisor about a problem with a particular project? Can there be a relationship where it is OK to be open and find solutions to problems as they arise?



## Employee Spotlight

### Keaston White, Legal Instruments Examiner, Realty

By Elsie Davis, External Affairs, Atlanta, GA

Keaston's career specialty is law, yet he has many artistic talents and interests. He writes poetry and short stories, and paints portraits, landscapes, and abstract art.

Now, he shares most of his writings and paintings with friends, but eventually he plans to sell and publish his works.



Keaston joined the Service's STEP program while he was still in high school at Collins Hill in Gwinnett County. He became a SCEP student during college when he attended Emory University and John Marshall Law School in Atlanta. In October of 2012, he passed the Georgia Bar. Last year, he also became a full time Service employee.

As a Legal Instruments Examiner, Keaston assists Realty Specialists by submitting preliminary and final land title opinion requests to the Regional Solicitor's Office, in an effort to ensure the Service has good title to the land it owns. He also prepares offer and acceptance packages for people selling land to the Service and helps maintain a database of information for land acquisitions.

Among Keaston's many interests was football. As a freshman on the Collins Hill football team, he played Strong Safety. September 11, 2001 proved to be a bad day for the nation and for Keaston. During practice, while he was playing Corner, Keaston suffered an injury which made him a quadriplegic. The setback changed his life, but not his career or artistic accomplishments.

## What's Trending

By Katherine Taylor, External Affairs, Atlanta, GA



**Apps:** Are you someone who likes the outdoors and hiking, but aren't sure where to go?

AllTrails is a nifty phone app that locates hiking trails in your

area. Not only that, it tells you the distance and level of difficulty, and you have the option of choosing nearest trails or most popular. Did we mention it's FREE?

**Social Media:** Our USFWS Instagram account is on FIRE (13,000 followers and growing)! If you haven't already, go follow us on [Instagram](#) (username: usfws).

**#MostSharedStory:** The Southeast has a rare winter visitor...a snowy owl! This story blew up on our Facebook page, and is currently the most popular

post on USFWS' Tumblr [Open Spaces](#) at <http://usfws.tumblr.com> blog.

**Culture:** If you're a lover of all things manatee and enjoy a good laugh, then we've got a gem of a comic strip for you: <http://mvsm.omnomzom.com/> Man versus Manatee is a favorite among our social media followers!



Snowy owl, photo: USFWS

## Bragging Rights

### Louisiana's Cajun Christmas

By David Stoughton, Southeast Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Lacombe, LA



A little boy visits Santa and Mrs. Claus. photo: Pon Dixon, USFWS

The Southeast Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex welcomed Santa and Mrs. Claus for the fifth annual Cajun Christmas event. With the help from volunteers and an abundance of Christmas decorations the visitor center was transformed into Santa's Cajun Cottage. Two of our faithful volunteers, Bill and Judy Jewell, provided both their time and talent to listen to some holiday wishes from local children. The refuge's friends group supplied visitors an assortment of delicious cookies, juice, coffee, and of course hot chocolate. While waiting for Santa, children explored the exhibits learning about restoration projects, area wildlife, and ecology.

Photos of the event were taken by talented photographer and Deputy Project Leader, Pon Dixon. A dedicated crew of volunteer "elves" recorded photos as they were taken to send to the families who came out in support of the event. Like all of the outreach and community programs that the refuge participates in this event was free to the public.

The two-hour event was the largest to date, nearly double in size from the previous year. More than 250 people visited with Santa and Mrs. Claus and learned about the eight National Wildlife refuges in their area.

### FWS Partners with the International Law Enforcement Academy in Botswana

*By Terry Hasting, Law Enforcement, Atlanta, GA*



*Participants practice interviewing and interrogation techniques. Terry Hastings, USFWS*

This summer, four Service Special Agents and one Wildlife Inspector flew to Gaborone, Botswana, to provide training in wildlife investigative techniques to game rangers and law enforcement officials from different countries within Africa. This training took place at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA).

The Wildlife Investigations Training Course is a two week course in which Service Special Agents and a Wildlife Inspector provide instruction on investigative techniques used by investigators on a daily basis when solving wildlife crimes. Service Special Agents and Wildlife Inspectors in cooperation with ILEA and the U.S. State Department have been travelling to Botswana for the past 10 years providing this Wildlife Investigator Course to participants in Africa.

Many international relationships have been forged and have resulted in international investigations involving the unlawful poaching or smuggling of wildlife such as elephant ivory and rhino horn, as well as many other species of wildlife which have been so adversely affected due to the enormous poaching problems that plague the African continent.

The class of participants included game rangers, customs officers, magistrates, prosecutors and biologists from six different African countries. Those countries represented were Botswana, Kenya, Cameroon, Gabon, Republic of

Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Thirty-four participants attended the two week investigative course. The team of instructors consisted of a Wildlife Inspector from Pembina, ND, and Special Agents from Atlanta, GA; Wichita, KS; Denver, CO; and Sacramento, CA.

### Artist in-Residence

*By Michelle Paduani, Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee Refuge, MS*



*Draft art work produced by Kathryn Hunter during her stay at the refuge. Photos of art work: USFWS*



*Hunter artwork at Noxubee. Refuge visitors get an up close and personal view of art in the making. Photo: Megan Bean, MS. State University*

The Artist-In-Residence Program at Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee Refuge is a success. Not only did it bring the artist Kathryn Hunter of Blackbird Letterpress in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to an awe inspiring place to re-jolt creative vibes, it brought the community of the refuge and surrounding area together to enjoy and explore art. Hunter was the first artist-in-residence in a new program partnership between the Mississippi State University Art Department, Starkville Area Arts Council, Friends of Noxubee Refuge, and

Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee Refuge. These partners are and will continue to be an integral piece to the program's success.

The Artist-In-Residence Program offers professional writers, composers, and visual artists the opportunity to pursue their artistic discipline while being surrounded by the refuge's inspiring landscape and wildlife. Selected artists stay in refuge housing for two- to four-weeks during each of three periods from March-April, June-July, and September-October.

During the artists stay, a house within the Bluff Lake Residential Unit is made available. The 1960's-built home, known as The Ibis, is located above the shores of Bluff Lake in the area of the original location for the refuge's headquarters and manager's home when established in 1940.

Selected artists participating in the Artist-In-Residence Program are asked to donate an original piece of work from, and representative of their residency at the refuge. This piece will serve to promote and celebrate the refuge and its wildlife..

### Trout in the Classroom with Chattahoochee Forest Hatchery

*By Crystal Thomas, Chattahoochee Forest Hatchery, Suches, GA*



*Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery provides eggs to Trout in the Classroom. L-R: Kelly Taylor, Deputy Project Leader; Carl Riggs, Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited Representative; Mitchell Pickelsimer, Facilities Operations Specialist. Photo: Crystal Thomas, USFWS*

In October 2013, Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery in North Georgia provided 2,000 Rainbow Trout eggs to the Blue Ridge Mountain Chapter 696 of Trout Unlimited for Trout in the Classroom programs at Fannin County



Middle School, Gilmer County High School, and Clear Creek Middle School. Trout in the Classroom is an exciting program where students learn about and participate in the egg hatching process and rearing of the trout to fingerling size of 3 to 4 inches before being released in the spring. The program has been a successful part of the seventh grade science program at Fannin County Middle School for the past few years. Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery has and will continue to participate as a partner in this program with Trout Unlimited by providing eggs, classroom presentations, and the Service's Biologist-in-Training guidance.

### Florida Panther Festival Draws a Crowd

*By Ken Warren, South Florida Ecological Services*



*The Service's Ben Nottingham (left) and Brad Cornell of the Collier County Audubon Society stand near the Living With Wildlife Pavilion, which Brad led efforts to coordinate. Photo: Ken Warren, USFWS*

The third-annual Florida Panther Festival was held November 16 in Naples, FL. It shed much-needed light on the somewhat mysterious life of Florida's state animal, the Endangered Florida panther.

Biologists, rangers and others from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and various partners were on hand at the festival to host the more than 1,500 people who showed up to learn about Florida panthers via interactive displays, presentations and other activities.

A highlight of the festival was the Living With Wildlife Pavilion, which showed how to safely protect pets and livestock from natural predators including panthers, black bears and alligators. It also educated those living in "Panther Country" on how to appreciate and conserve the dwindling habitat for one of the most endangered animals on the planet.

Shannon Miller, of Defenders of Wildlife chaired the steering committee, she said, "We had another great event. We had at least 1,500 attendees, and a total of 50 vendors and exhibitors. This was our biggest year yet."

The Service co-sponsored the festival with Defenders of Wildlife, the National Park Service, Florida Gulf Coast University, Nature On Wheels, CREW Land and Water Trust, Collier County Parks and Recreation, Audubon, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Naples-Marco Island Convention and Visitors Bureau.

### Hoteliers Visit Arthur R. Marshall National Wildlife Refuge

*By Elaine Meier of Elaine Meier Associates*



*Nancy Barnes, Jeanne Schroeder and Nick Durso listen to National Wildlife Refuge Guide, Serena Rinker at hotelier event. Photo: Elaine Meier of Elaine Meier Associates*

More than 60 hotel concierges, managers and hospitality staff in Palm Beach County discovered first-hand what Palm Beach County's wild west has to offer. As part of its eco-tourism initiative, the Arthur R. Marshall Foundation for the Everglades held an event at the Arthur

R. Marshall National Wildlife Refuge, November 19, to ensure that Palm Beach County hoteliers are familiar with what is considered a treasure by the National Wildlife Refuge system...the Everglades in Palm Beach County.

Adventurers received a quick overview and were divided into smaller groups. They visited the exhibitions in the refuge's visitor center, walked the trail and went for airboat rides, arranged especially for the group's visit.

Attendees included seven students from Forest Hill High School in West Palm Beach, Florida, participating in a hospitality curriculum, who helped staff members with the event's coordination

### Nature Rocks! Family Nature Club

*By Jennifer Willard, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jamestown, KY*



*Showing off her artwork. Photo: Jennifer Willard, USFWS*

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery and the Russell County Library presented a program about migration, Cooperative Compass, in mid-November.

We discussed what migration is and that true migrators make a two-way trip each year from one place to another and then back again. We discussed why animals would migrate and about the different ways animals use their environment to

## Leadership Quote

*"Seeking out people with different views, different perspectives, different ideas is often challenging, because it requires us to set aside judgment and open our minds. But we have to remind ourselves that to get beyond where we are, where I believe most of us are, we would all be well served to choose our music carefully, to stop talking and listen to one another."*

*- Susan Scott, Fierce Leadership: A Bold Alternative to the Worst "Best" Practices of Business Today*

know which way to go. This raised the topic of landscape maps and how animals use the landscape to know that they are going the right way. Other ways that animals may know the right direction to go is by following the stars, by using the sun, or using what is called a magnetic compass (the pull of the North and South poles).

We also talked about how far they may migrate. Some animals, such as the Artic tern, may travel as far as 21,750 miles. The group had the opportunity to make their very own Monarch butterfly by using tissue paper, a clothespin and a pipe cleaner. Later, everyone enjoyed butterfly snacks made out of apple slices, nuts, raisins and grapes.



*Fruit butterfly snack. Photo: Jennifer Willard, USFWS*

## Okefenokee NWR Celebrates the Opening of Reconstructed Boardwalk

*By Sarah Wyatt, Okefenokee NWR*



*Chesser Island Boardwalk. Photo: Garry Tucker, USFWS*

The newly rebuilt Chesser Island Boardwalk at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is back and open for business! The boardwalk was officially unveiled to the community during a ribbon-cutting/dedication ceremony held November 23, 2013. Refuge and Regional Office staff, the local Chamber of Commerce, and supportive citizens from the community of Folkston, Georgia

met together to make the brand new boardwalk official. Even several of the Hydra Engineering staff who built the boardwalk returned to the refuge to share the refuge and the boardwalk with their families!

Construction began in April 2013, replacing the original boardwalk that was lost to fire in June 2011 during the Honey Prairie Wildfire. The wildfire devoured the three-quarter-mile long boardwalk and damaged the lower level of the Owls Roost Tower at the boardwalk's end. The new boardwalk is eight feet wide, and consists of new attributes for protection from the next blaze, which can occur frequently in the Okefenokee's fire prone ecosystem. A brand new well and 3,700-foot waterline services 88 sprinkler connections, placed every 40 feet, to help prevent future damage. The boardwalk also was rebuilt with the consideration of using more environmentally friendly products in the construction. Trex decking, made of recycled plastic such as grocery bags, was used to make a more durable and weather-resistant boardwalk. In addition, visitors can not only casually stroll their way through the Okefenokee Swamp without ever getting their feet wet, but find places of rest at any of the three 16x16 foot covered shelters with benches.

Following the same path as the old boardwalk, visitors can now enjoy the beloved hike into the majestic swamp. From local students visiting during an environmental education outing, to visitors from foreign countries taking in the sights, the boardwalk is a treasured asset to the refuge. Along the way they can observe numerous species of wildlife including alligators and migratory birds, snakes and turtles, and even raccoons and bobcats. After climbing up the Owl's Roost Tower and looking out over the vastness of the wild Okefenokee, it is easy to see that the Chesser Island Boardwalk is back, and better than ever.



*Chesser Island Boardwalk. Photo: Garry Tucker, USFWS*

## Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Space for Wildlife Festival

*By Candice Stevenson, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Titusville, Florida*



*Puddles and refuge employee Candice Stevenson with 50th anniversary cake. photo: Sandee Larse*

The Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge celebrated 50 years in 2013. The refuge was established through an agreement with NASA in 1963, and now manages all non-operational lands (approximately 140,000 acres) on the Kennedy Space Center for wildlife. We kicked off a year-long celebration with a lecture series in January through April with topics covering the biology and history of the refuge. Special environmental education programs for kids were offered during the summer, and we ended our celebration with a festival on November 9th!

The theme for the festival was "Space for Wildlife" which is a double entendre, meaning we conserve the space wildlife needs and NASA operates space missions. Without NASA, the refuge would not exist; therefore, because of space missions, wildlife has their space. Less than 10 Percent of the 140,000 acres are used for NASA facilities, the rest is managed for wildlife.



The festival was attended by nearly 700 people who enjoyed the games and activities for kids, wildlife exhibits and presentations, archaeological and historic artifacts, food vendors, music and an art exhibit! We were fortunate to have Nathaniel P. Reed speak at the Opening Ceremonies to kick off the day. Mr. Reed was the Assistant Secretary of Interior (1971-1977) who played an important role in the history of the Refuge by negotiating and signing an agreement with NASA to expand the refuge to 140,000 acres in 1972.

## Friends and Volunteers

### Red River Refuge Friends Group Earns Regional Director's Honor Award

*By Terri Jacobson, Refuge Ranger*



*Refuge Friends board members Nancy Menasco and Zac Burson show off the clear glass award. Photo: Pat Stinson, USFWS*

The Friends of Red River National Wildlife Refuge won the Southeast Regional Director's Honor Award for Outstanding Friends Group of the Year. Board member Zac Burson attended the Regional Director's Honor Awards Ceremony in Atlanta to receive the award, on behalf of the Red River National Wildlife Refuge Friends Group. The glass award was proudly presented back in Louisiana at the annual Friends Group Potluck Christmas Party.

### What Wildlife Species Poop at the "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Boardwalk?

*By Toni Westland, J.N. "Ding" Darling Refuge, Sanibel, Florida*

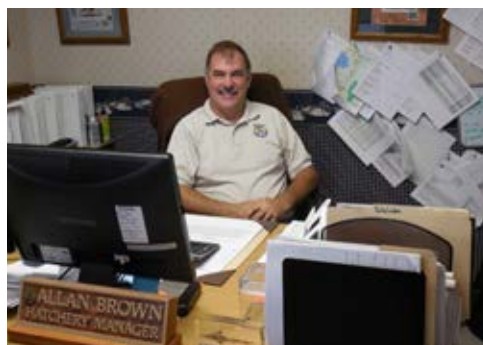


*Artist's replica of bobcat scat. Photo: Toni Westland, USFWS*

The "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, the refuge's Friends Group, contributed \$7,000 to place 10 new flip, scat panels and 10 engraved wildlife tracks along a new, 200-foot refuge boardwalk. The boardwalk links The Sanibel School with the refuge's popular, two-mile Indigo Trail. Students and refuge visitors can view the tracks, nine scats, and one pellet provided by 10 different wildlife species that can be discovered along the trail.

## Follow the Leader... Allan Brown

Allan Brown, project leader of Welatka National Fish Hatchery in Florida, has been with the Fish and Wildlife Service 30 years this coming June. He has served at Welatka for about 19 years. Allan also is the Warmwater Hatchery Program Supervisor overseeing project leaders at seven other Southeastern hatcheries.



*Allan Brown, Photo: USFWS*

### What is the Welatka National Fish Hatchery's biggest asset?

The hatchery's biggest asset is unquestionably our six-person staff. I am most fortunate to have a staff that can pretty much handle everything that is thrown their way. Second would be the hatchery itself. Covering more than 500 acres with a free flowing spring for a water supply as well as several deep wells and the St. Johns River, we have the capabilities to be as diverse as our imagination allows.

### What do you think is the biggest accomplishment at Welatka this past year?

I'm proud of how we have been able to adapt to ever changing needs and priorities. We have been closely examining where we need to put our efforts, where we can do the most good for the landscapes we are trying to restore, recover, and protect. Whether it is developing new rearing practices for different species to be raised at the hatchery, proving refuge for endangered species, participating in dam removals in North Carolina, planting sea grass, or working on the issue of invasive species, we are rising to the challenges that are put before us.

### What was the biggest project or challenge at Welatka this past year?

It is always a challenge to re-focus efforts to meet new priorities or directions that we are given for conservation, especially when operating under such tight fiscal constraints. It is critical that we utilize our hatcheries to meet the growing need for conservation efforts, not just by raising and distributing aquatic species, but by looking at the entire realm of conservation needs.

### What advice would you give someone who is seeking to become a leader?

To be a good leader, you have to be able to inspire confidence in your employees. If you passionately believe in your mission and communicate that to your staff, it is much easier for them to believe in that mission also. You must be able to clearly articulate what your mission is, how your facility fits into that mission and look at the long range benefits of what you are doing and how it fits into the overall big picture. Sometimes people, even good

leaders, tend to get caught up in the daily grind and begin to wonder if what they do is important and how it fits into long term goals. A good leader always inspires that sense of confidence and can impart that to employees. Even the smallest of benefits play an important role in the overall health of the landscape.

### What qualities do the best leaders possess?

Develop a leadership style that fits your personality. How you handle people and adversity gets fairly ingrained in you as you work your way through the ranks of the Service to leadership positions. Don't try to re-work your style to fit some preconceived notion of what a leader should be. Of course, you can and should continue to grow as a leader, but by being true to who you are, you can be a great leader. The best leaders treat people with respect and fairness. They are compassionate but unwavering in their beliefs. They are consistent in how they handle people and situations. That way, people will know where they stand and expect very few surprises.

## Get to Know an Office:

### External Affairs

**Debra Johnson:** As the executive assistant for External Affairs, my primary duties are Time and Attendance, travel, purchasing, etc., so I don't have a typical day. I am the support for a communication-based group of specialists that handle congressional affairs, public affairs, social media, web, and graphics. This means that my days are pretty much dictated by what is going on in one of those worlds.

**Ellen Marcus:** I am a graphic designer and create publications for print and the web. With Service staff members, I strive to highlight our work into the simplest, most legible and visually appealing way possible. Through the National Design of brochures, newsletters, fact sheets, posters, invitations, reports, exhibits, and more, I further the mission of the Service.

**Elsie Davis:** Public Affairs Specialist. I serve as editor of E-Grits, encouraging people to tell their stories about the people, places, and events of the Service. I also write and edit stories and outreach plans sharing the listing and

recovery work the Service is doing to help endangered, threatened, and candidate species.

### Jeff Fleming, Assistant Regional Director:

I work with and for an extraordinary Regional Directorate Team here in the Southeast Region to support its regional priorities as well as program-specific communications needs. I provide support and advice day-to-day working with them and support a dynamic communications team. All that manifests itself in different ways and can include editing outreach materials, coordinating response to a media or congressional challenge facing us, and helping to marshal ideas and resources to take advantage of an opportunity to promote our regional priorities like the At-Risk initiative, SHC, Gulf Restoration, or a refuge boundary expansion. It also involves coordinating communications with External Affairs leaders at headquarters and my colleagues across the regions sharing ideas and looking for way to take advantage of new technologies and ideas in difficult budget times. My hope each day is that I help each of them accomplish their goals for our agency and ensure they have the resources they need to do the very best work possible meeting the highest standards and expectations of our regional leadership and everyone who makes our Region and its work so extraordinary. While I don't always succeed perfectly at this, I get up each morning with the hope and expectation that I and everyone I work with and for will do something special for the resource and those we work with.

**Jennifer Strickland:** I serve as Team Lead for Digital Communications and Strategy, supporting regional social and web and providing consult and training to employees agency-wide on digital issues. I also lead on video production, shooting, uploading, and close captioning regional video content. I work closely



*The dedication of this group is unequalled. This photo was taken on January 7, 2014, a day of record-breaking cold temperatures in Atlanta, like 6 degrees. Photo: Tom MacKenzie, USFWS*

*L to R: Katherine Taylor, Jennifer Strickland, Kristen Peters, Ellen Marcus, Tim Keogh, Debra Johnson, Tom MacKenzie, Liz Chebib, Elsie Davis, Jeff Fleming and Stacy Shelton.*

with Katherine and Tim, supporting their work and bridging gaps between website development and social media content production, and oftentimes she connects digital and print production. Most often, I work on a project-by-project basis, developing communication strategies and carrying out special tasks with an emphasis on internal communications and priority issues.

**Katherine Taylor:** As a Digital Content Specialist, my day begins by tuning into the digital-sphere to "listen" to what's going on in the world of science and conservation. I use a number of tools to do this: Sprout Analytics, Facebook, Social Mention, along with scouring the web for articles. The rest of my day is filled with crafting posts for social media from press releases and information sent to me from the field or office colleagues, providing guidance and assistance to our field station Social Media Managers, engaging with followers, web editing and monitoring our analytics for trends.

**Kristen Peters:** As the Congressional Affairs Specialist for the Region, my day involves working with programs and headquarters on issues of interest to members of Congress, committees, and their staff. I work closely with program staff to respond to inquiries from congressional offices. I also coordinate with headquarters to track and analyze legislation of interest to the Service



### *External Affairs continued...*

and to respond to queries from the Department. While my day often entails reacting to multiple issues, I find time to proactively engage congressional offices in the Region's great conservation work.

**Liz Chebib:** As a Graphic Designer for the Southeast Region, I design publications for our regional and field offices. All publications are designed by our office: general brochures, tearsheets, trail guides, bird lists, hunting and fishing brochures, invitations, reports, and tabletop exhibit designs.

**Stacy Shelton:** Public Affairs Specialist. On a good day, I get to tell a story about the awesome work our folks are doing to advance conservation, restoration and recovery for the Southeast's unique fish and wildlife, and their habitats. I also get to help communicate with internal staff and partners about the Southeast Region's At-Risk Species Conservation Strategy and our Gulf of Mexico restoration work.

**Tim Keogh:** As the Regional Web Manager, I start my days by checking my e-mail and responding to the ones that require feedback. I work on the website requests from various field stations in our region. These requests usually consist of updating content, removing content, adding links to documents, and fixing broken links, just to name a few. I also work closely with our staff writers to make sure I upload their important news releases on time. There are several long term projects I work on when time permits, such as website redesigns, digital graphics, and digital illustration to be used in web pages.

**Tom MacKenzie:** Public Affairs Specialist. I've got the best job in the Service. On any given day I might be in the field monitoring a dam removal, writing about hurricane damage, videotaping wildlife detector dogs, or trapped in conference calls at my desk (my favorite!) I am also proud to work with the 10 Native American Tribes in the Southeast, and occasionally with those tribes that once called the Southeast home prior to forced removal. I work with a team of professionally trained, seriously fun friends here in External Affairs in the Regional Office, as well as field Public Affairs Specialists, Headquarters, and every program in the Service. I keep an ear out for good stories all the time and rely on Fish and Wildlife Service pros with the 35 pound brains to get the right

information to the American people and the world audience. I also rely on the folks with 36 pound brains who drive tracked vehicles blowing away hundred year-old dams to free up fish passage. I also try to help people write, talk to the media, and yes, think like our customer, the American people, who we work for. If I can be of assistance to you, please call or e-mail. I work for you too.

## Coming and Going

### Special Agent Kash Schriefer retires

*By Stephen Clark, Law Enforcement, Lacombe, Louisiana*



*Guy Bradley award winner Kash Schriefer retired in May, after 25 years of federal service. Photo: USFWS*

As one of the Service's most knowledgeable Special Agents, Kash Schriefer spent the last 25 years investigating federal wildlife crimes involving several different countries and at least 27 states, including Puerto Rico. In May, Kash closed his career with great

honor, as the 2013 federal recipient of the Guy Bradley award. This prestigious award, named after the first wildlife law enforcement officer killed during the performance of his duties, seeks to recognize outstanding state and federal officers who have made significant lifetime contributions in support of wildlife law enforcement.

### Nora David retires

*By Elsie Davis, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia*

Nora joined the Service in 2004 as an Environmental Protection Specialist in the Southeast Regional Office of Engineering. In her position, she managed all environmental programs including environmental audits, inspections, reports, energy, and sustainability programs. Prior to the Service, she worked with the Department of Defense for 15 years. Nora was raised in Egypt and moved to the United States



*Nora David, photo: USFWS*

in 1979. She and her family also have lived in Japan.

"I loved my job, and I am thankful for the opportunity to have worked with many talented people during my career," Nora said. "My family and I are looking forward to new adventures, traveling, and volunteer opportunities."

### Special Agent Philip "Flip" Siragusa retires

*By Stephen Clark, Law Enforcement, Lacombe, Louisiana*

After an impressive 28 year law enforcement career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Special Agent



*Special Agent Flip Siragusa was a leader in migratory game bird enforcement. photo: USFWS*

Philip "Flip" Siragusa retired at the end of September, leaving behind a long list of accomplishments, predominantly in his native state of Louisiana. Flip began his federal career as a refuge officer at Delta and Breton Sound National Wildlife Refuges in southeastern Louisiana, before becoming a Service Special Agent in 1988. As a Special Agent, Flip was initially assigned to duty in Ft. Worth, Texas, and since 1991 was stationed in Lafayette, Louisiana. Flip was recently honored as the Service's nominee for the 2012 Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) Officer of the Year award.



## What Do You Think?

This issue's question: Which of the following regional priorities would you like to read a story about in an upcoming issue of E-Grits? Share your answers with us: <http://bit.ly/1gQrXl9>

## Survey Says...

**You told us: What is your favorite threatened or endangered species? Why?**

There are so many that I can choose from. However, I will go a different route and pick the darter (fish) family, because they are very unique colors and did undergraduate/graduate work on the fish.

- T.D.

The Endangered Florida panther's recovery is synonymous with maintaining much of the unique bio-diversity and wildlife heritage that make Florida such an interesting place to live. One reason I find this species to be amazing is because while panthers are usually quiet, they communicate through vocalizations, as well as raking its claws on fallen trees. The sounds they make have been described as chirps, peeps, whistles, purrs, moans, screams, growls and hisses. Females signal their readiness to mate by yowling or caterwauling. A Florida panther rakes its claws on tree trunks to release scent from glands on its feet. This allows other cats to learn about the original cat that left the scent mark: its identity, status (dominant or subordinate), age, sex, reproductive state and spatial dimensions of its home range. Very captivating species!

- Ken Warren, South Florida  
Ecological Services Office

Tar River spiny mussel (*Elliptio steinstansana*) - it is a beautiful yellowish rayed mussel, and one of only three known freshwater mussel species that has SPINES! Finding one of these in the wild is a truly remarkable experience. The Tar River spiny mussel is like a little gem hidden in our piedmont streams in North Carolina.

- Sarah McRae, Raleigh, North Carolina

The American Wood Stork, because the young have a face only a mother could love. The adults are majestic in flight. Their nerve reflexes to catch fish are unsurpassed. A unique and wonderful bird.

- Greg Masson, Regional Office  
Ecological Services

## Photo Caption Contest

*Make up a caption and send it in. Captions will be published next issue and the winner announced.*

*Email [Elsie\\_Davis@fws.gov](mailto:Elsie_Davis@fws.gov)*



What is the species on the plant? A creature from another planet?  
Photo by Larry Woodward, Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge.

## Holiday Illustration



Tim Keogh



## From Our Facebook Pages...



RAWR!!!  
I'm  
Ferocious!



Just  
kidding, I'm  
adorable.

Photos by MyFWC

*photos: courtesy of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*

## Southeast Region 2013 Highlights by Program

### Budget and Administration

Budget & Administration demonstrated that belt-tightening doesn't have to mean doing without. It means working smarter and being innovative. In 2013, B&A fully implemented two additional shared-service arrangements with the Southwest Region (R2), so that we are collaborating cross-Regionally on:

- HR support in the areas of staffing & classification for new hires (led by R2);
- Worker's Compensation support and management (led by R4);
- Diversity & Civil Rights (led by R4).

These novel approaches to provide improved services have saved both Regions more than \$500,000 per year! Now that's something to celebrate.

### Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

Demonstrating that with the right response, big problems can give way to big opportunities, the Southeast Region's Deepwater Horizon NRDA Team led the NRDA Trustees' Early Restoration planners in crafting the 2,500-page Draft Phase III Early Restoration Plan/Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. The draft plan, which is undergoing public review through February 4, 2014, dedicates \$627 million to 44 early restoration projects across Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida and Texas - including restoration efforts at Breton Island National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana and Gulf Island National Seashore in Florida. Our DOI Team managed production of the draft document and Gulf-wide public engagement activities that began in mid-December and will continue into early 2014.

Our Deepwater Horizon Team also was actively engaged in one of the largest Tribal National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation efforts ever conducted in the Gulf of Mexico Region. Our team led the effort to

## Something You Didn't Know About Me



**Mike Oetker's career in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is well into its second decade. In March of last year, he began this latest chapter in that career as the Southeast Region's Deputy Regional Director.**

"My first job in the federal government was a temporary GS-5 physical science tech for the National Biological Survey. That was 1995 in Wisconsin. When the federal government was shutdown in the fall of 1995 my temporary job was terminated. I was unemployed for three months before enrolling at Michigan State University to get my master's degree. Roughly 19 years later with the benefit of some exceptional mentors to me, I've got one of the best jobs yet serving as your deputy regional director."



create a Programmatic Agreement to meet Section 106 obligations related to Early Restoration projects, working with other Federal Trustees (NOAA, USDA, EPA), affected states (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas), and Tribes with an interest in the Gulf of Mexico coastal Region. Once finalized, the agreement will ensure protection of the rich cultural heritage that makes the Gulf Coast unique, facilitate the timely implementation of the Early Restoration projects, and serve as a model for Section 106 compliance in the future.

### Ecological Services

Ecological Services is proving the power of partnerships to do good things for wildlife and people where imperiled species are concerned. ES completed a gopher tortoise strategic conservation plan that identifies the conservation actions needed to possibly preclude the need to list the species under the ESA in its eastern range. Conservation actions co-leads were identified among biologists from the Service and State agencies within the range.

In addition, ES removed the Yadkin goldenrod from the list of candidate species awaiting protection as a result of an agreement with Alcoa Power Generating, Inc. that demonstrates its conservation commitments in the years ahead to protect this species. This is a key step in showing partners we mean what we say: That we want to proactively conserve rare species to prevent the need to add them to the Federal list of threatened and endangered species.

### External Affairs

Communicators in EA hit the ground running and never stopped in 2013, as they worked to help the Region handle some of its highest visibility challenges and opportunities. EA tackled controversial refuge expansion plans and the issue of genetically modified crops on refuges; carried out complex Congressional information campaigns; helped Ecological Services with 35 outreach packages for the year (that might be a record!); provided communications expertise for the Service's Vision for a Healthy Gulf of Mexico and the Southeast Region's Conservation Strategy for At-Risk Species; communicated to combat red wolf killings in North Carolina; and coordinated outreach efforts to

create web-based, State-by-State breakouts of the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. EA's full-Service communications team earned its keep, providing communications support for every major issue that arose in the Southeast.

Proving that folks in EA strive to be cutting edge in their communications approaches, they used the constantly evolving social media to promote all of the Service's highest priority initiatives, including Strategic Habitat Conservation, At-Risk Species, and the selection of surrogate species. They used a variety of platforms--websites, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and more--to engage 21st Century audiences and help them better understand and support what the Service does to conserve wildlife and their habitats for the American people. And it's working! In the year, social media (Facebook, Twitter) was the #1 driver of all web traffic to our Southeast Region website. We have nearly doubled our Twitter following in one year, and EA now provides more direct support to the field than ever before. With 42 Facebook pages, we have a larger presence than any other Service Region, and we lead all Regions in terms of social media growth and impact this year, gaining 27,500 new Facebook Fans and reaching 7.9 MILLION individual Facebook users with our Service communications. EA's digital communications are generating on-the-ground results: We successfully recruited 11 new volunteers and two resident volunteers for South Arkansas Complex using only Facebook.

### Fisheries

Thinking big has led to some amazing accomplishments in the Uwharrie River watershed in North Carolina: The Fisheries program coordinated across Service programs and with other partners in removing five dams that opened up 189 miles to American shad and eel; and reconnected habitat with the Atlantic Ocean, roughly 200 miles downstream. Duke Energy is trapping and transporting more than 20,000 American shad 20 miles upstream to the Pee Dee River as part of its FERC relicensing. The fry will ride the Pee Dee River currents to the Atlantic Ocean, growing to maturity in about four years. Their return will enrich the river's ecology by providing marine nutrients

to the river, as they die after spawning, much like salmon. Resident fish and freshwater mussels also will benefit from the reconnected stream segments and the marine nutrients provided by the shad. Removal of the five dams will reconnect aquatic life to roughly 54 miles of river, 10 miles of creek, and 318 miles of perennial tributaries.

The Fisheries program has faced its operational challenges by becoming even more efficient and effective: Fisheries developed a watershed prioritization tool to focus limited resources on areas where the Region can have the greatest conservation impact. Work is beginning across Service programs and with other partners to develop watershed management plans on two new priority watersheds, Wheeler and Upper St Johns. The partnering efforts of Fisheries staff supported the Service's highest priority conservation efforts and approach.

### Gulf Restoration

Our multi-Regional Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Team released the FWS Vision for a Healthy Gulf of Mexico in 2013, a sweeping assessment of what the Service believes it will take to sustainably restore the Gulf of Mexico and its watershed. The Vision identifies important conservation strategies and key focal areas across the entire watershed, from the Prairie Pothole Region in the Dakotas to the Everglades in Southwest Florida. Threats to the Gulf of Mexico and its coastline go well beyond the five Gulf States, and we believe that the solution must be tackled on a national level. This document is our challenge to think bigger than ever before. It is also a catalyst for conversations with our many partners who are working to restore the Gulf. The Gulf Team is currently developing a more detailed blueprint highlighting specific conservation efforts that we can achieve with our partners to ensure that our investments make a measurable difference to the future of the Gulf of Mexico.

### Law Enforcement

FY 2013 was a good year for the Office of Law Enforcement and a bad year for folks violating laws protecting wildlife. In Florida, two men pled guilty to charges of conspiring to violate the Lacey Act by buying wildlife illegally in the Florida Keys, while another person was found guilty of obstruction



of justice. This was part of Operation Rock Bottom, a long-term investigation into the illegal harvesting and sale of marine life resources from the Florida Keys: live corals and live rock, sea fans, anemones, angel fish, lemon sharks, nurse sharks, bonnethead sharks, eagle rays, and American alligators. Service agents worked on the investigation with Special Agents from the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement and were assisted by Officers of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. The five subjects/businesses involved got their just desserts. Total penalties to date are:

- Monetary: \$16,300.00
- Forfeited Property: \$21,000.00
- Jail: 4 years, 8 months
- Probation: 7 years
- Home Confinement: 21 months
- Supervised Release: 5 years
- Forfeited wildlife: undisclosed value

The Office of Law Enforcement's Wildlife Inspection program welcomed some new members to the team this year—the program's very first “wildlife detector dogs.” The four retrievers – named Viper, Butter, Lancer and Locket – were trained as part of a national effort to stem the growing trade in threatened animal parts, such as elephant ivory and rhino horn. The four graduating dogs and their Service Wildlife Inspector-Handlers completed the 13-week training course at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Detector Dog Training Center in Newnan, Georgia. Two of the four dogs, Viper and Butter, were assigned to inspector-handlers in the Southeast Region.

### Migratory Birds

**Birds of a Feather:** Some of the nation's rarest migratory birds, including the reddish egret, rusty blackbird, and black rail, benefited from the leadership and targeted partnerships generated by the Migratory Bird Program in 2013. As part of the Reddish Egret Working Group, the Migratory Bird Program helped finalize the Reddish Egret Conservation Action Plan that serves as a guide for conserving this rarest of wading birds throughout its range. The Plan identifies focal colony sites and foraging areas that should be priorities for collective conservation effort and provides the context to support management action

for locally important habitats. Migratory Birds staff also served in a key role on the Rusty Blackbird International Working Group that is working to understand and reverse the decline of this species, which has experienced what may be the most profound population decline of any North American bird. The Program made plans with External Affairs to promote the “Rusty Blackbird Blitz” on national wildlife refuges and other lands this spring, taking advantage of citizen-scientists to increase understanding of migration patterns and habitat needs. Additionally, Migratory Birds is helping lead the effort to develop a range-wide conservation strategy for the black rail, one of our Southeast Region At-Risk Species.

The Program also is working with a diverse group of scientists and experts to develop a comprehensive, integrated monitoring approach that can inform restoration decisions and provide solutions to urgent and long-term conservation needs for the birds of the northern Gulf of Mexico. In addition, Migratory Birds continued to lead the nation in issuing eagle permits that provide for sustainable and increasing populations of bald eagles and allow for a variety of human land uses. Migratory Birds and Ecological Services staff worked the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to produce a map showing the potential risk from wind energy projects to eagles and other species of concern and sensitive habitats in coastal North Carolina. This map is intended to assist wind developers with evaluating risks for proposed wind energy projects on private lands that do not necessarily require Federal authorization and are appropriate for use of the Land-Based Voluntary Wind Energy Guidelines.

### Refuges

Stewardship of the land and its resources is what the Fish and Wildlife Service is all about. No one does that better than the folks in the Southeast's national wildlife refuges. The stats tell the story: Refuge staff made a difference for wildlife on the ground through prescribed burning more than 82,000 acres; clearing more than 10,000 acres of invasive exotic plants; providing habitat for more than 2 million waterfowl on 12 refuges alone in the Lower Mississippi Valley; and adding 51 tracts of land, totaling almost 18,000 acres, to 10 national wildlife refuges in 6 states.

People from around the world come to our country and to the Southeast Region specifically to enjoy our magnificent outdoors and all it offers. No one knows that better than our refuges program. They connected 12 million visitors to nature on our southeastern refuges, hosted 680 special events, and provided environmental education to nearly 200,000 students. To pull this off, refuges staff worked with nearly 7,000 volunteers that provided 340,000 hours of service; employed more than 200 young people; and continued to strengthen relationships with our 46 Friends Groups.

### Science Applications

The six Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) in the Southeast have made milestone accomplishments toward establishing common biological outcomes fundamental to the SHC approach to conservation. In the South Atlantic LCC a “conservation blueprint” is well underway (<http://www.southatlanticlcc.org/page/conservation-blueprint>). Indicators have been chosen and represent other components of the system that are either too expensive or time consuming to model and measure. For example, on beaches and dunes, indicators include productivity of loggerhead sea turtles, index of beach birds, and miles of altered beach.

Science Applications staff began the first phases of a Regional assessment of priority science needs in 2013. Preliminary results indicate the Region's highest priorities and needs include an increase in inventory and monitoring, increased capacity for data management, increased studies for basic life history attributes of imperiled species, and more work on invasive species. These results are the first step in building the Region's “Science Agenda.” Opportunities to add to this survey, view the results, and continue to be part of this discussion are available on the Southeast's Science Network Group on Griffin Groups ([www.griffingroups.com](http://www.griffingroups.com)). If you are interested in joining this network group, please contact Laura Brandt ([Laura\\_Brandt@fws.gov](mailto:Laura_Brandt@fws.gov)) or Bob Ford ([Robert\\_P\\_Ford@fws.gov](mailto:Robert_P_Ford@fws.gov)) to receive an invitation and instructions on how to join.



## Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration

The Southeast Region's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program helps to ensure that the American people get to enjoy one of our nation's best assets—the great outdoors. WSFR approved 928 financial transactions, including new grant awards, modifications and de-obligations, totaling more than \$251 million to State/Territory fish and wildlife agencies. These funds were used for wildlife and fisheries projects, land acquisition, operation and maintenance of public lands, habitat restoration, hunter and aquatic education activities, technical guidance; boating access, and shooting and archery range projects. The Pittman Robertson (Wildlife Restoration) Act and the Sport Fish Restoration (Dingell-Johnson) Act promotes partnerships between Federal and State fish and wildlife agencies, the sporting industry, conservation groups, and sportsmen to benefit wildlife and their habitats and has been key to implementing the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. The funding is derived from excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, fishing and archery equipment, motorboat and small engine fuels and from import duties and interest. If you love to hunt, fish, target shoot or boat, it's easy to appreciate the benefits of the WSFR program. Other benefits include protection of non-game species, and habitat enhancements.

This year, WSFR Program staff completed the reconciliation of all records for lands acquired with WSFR Program funding, with the first land acquisition action taking place in 1938 in Kentucky. In order to review and reconcile all the Federal and state records, the staff communicated and closely coordinated with state agency staffs; reviewed lands records, deeds and grants sources; and conducted site visits. In addition, the WSFR Fiscal Branch created a SharePoint site to facilitate easy access to critical grant management information for our state partners. Reports that show award status, availability of funds, due dates and receipt of mandatory annual status reports are posted on a regular basis. We have received positive feedback on the site from the states.

